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President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Meetarbhan (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 15 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/280)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/66/273)

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to thank the Secretary-General, on behalf of my delegation, for the report on intercultural, interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue contained in document A/66/280. Our appreciation also goes to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the report on the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, as contained in document A/66/273. We take note of the recommendations.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the fourth annual report of United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (A/66/305). It is encouraging to see the expansion in the membership of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations. That said, we welcome the convening of the Doha Forum in December and stand ready to host one of the events in future.

Indonesia has always dedicated itself to promoting mutual respect for religious and cultural diversity. We have keenly supported initiatives that deal with the challenges of cultural diversity. Dialogue and mutual cooperation among faiths and cultures are inherent to Indonesia's history. We have had centuries of practice in fostering tolerance and promoting cooperation among our immensely varied ethnic groups.

We profoundly believe in the wisdom of dialogue and its efficacy as a cure for ignorance, prejudice and hatred. As a result, we have been actively involved in dialogue, particularly interfaith and intercultural dialogue, at all levels. We have developed a strategy to empower moderates by actively involving interreligious civil society organizations.

At the national level, Government and civil society organizations have been working together on a number of initiatives, including the Forum for Harmony among Religious Groups. The Forum not only conducts dialogues among various religious leaders and groups, but also actively promotes religious harmony through social education campaigns.

At the international level, we have held bilateral interfaith dialogues with 16 other countries and the Holy See. We also launched a regional interfaith dialogue among South-East Asian and South-West Pacific countries in 2004, as well as the Asia-Europe Meeting Interfaith Dialogue (ASEM) in 2005. Both Dialogues have become annual events, and in that regard, we welcome the recent conclusion of the seventh Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Interfaith Dialogue, held last week in Manila.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Indonesia is of the view that the media plays an instrumental role in promoting and nurturing the culture of dialogue and cooperation among ethnicities, cultures, religions and civilizations. The mass media have the power to excite the masses. They also have the capacity to educate and enlighten, to impart wisdom to public opinion and to mediate public dialogue that leads to cooperation, peace and mutual respect.

In a democracy, freedom of the press ensures a dynamic free market of ideas in which prejudice and bigotry cannot rule. Understanding the strategic role of the media, Indonesia worked together with Norway to facilitate the Global Inter-Media Dialogue from 2006 to 2008. The three-year forum produced a network of journalists from different parts of the world who are committed to continuing to contribute to democratic life, emphasizing the core values and ethics of journalism built upon respect for the truth, independence and professional social responsibility.

All of those existing initiatives on interfaith, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue have become part of a global network aimed at promoting peace and harmony. But they would not suffice if they were to remain only within conference halls. We must recognize that dialogue is not an end in itself. Dialogue will amount to nothing if it does not lead to cooperation at the grass-roots level.

Finally, Indonesia would like to reiterate its commitment to supporting and closely working with international communities to promote interconnected dialogue initiatives, with a view to fostering a culture of peace, development and respect for human rights.

Mr. de Séllos (Brazil): Brazil wants to commend the continuous efforts of the Secretary-General to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. In that regard, Brazil welcomes with great satisfaction both documents (A/66/280, A/66/273) presented for our analysis today under agenda item 15, "Culture of Peace".

As a multi-ethnic, multireligious nation, Brazil is strongly committed to the principles that inspire and guide the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. It was a great honour for my country to host in Rio de Janeiro, in May 2010, the third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations. In a celebration of diversity and inclusiveness, we were honoured to host 109 official delegations and more than 7,000 participants, including representatives of civil society, religious communities, political parties, academia, journalists, the private sector, youth movements as well as human rights defenders.

Despite many relevant efforts, we are confronted today with an increasing danger of division. We note with concern and deep regret that violent attacks against religious and ethnic minorities continue to occur in various regions of the world. Fighting xenophobia, extremism and racial hatred through education aimed at dialogue and tolerance must remain a major priority of the international community. As President Dilma Rousseff stressed in her recent message to the Assembly,

> "Since late 2010, we have witnessed a series of grass-roots demonstrations that have come to be known as the Arab Spring. Brazil is the adopted homeland of many immigrants from that part of the world. Brazilians sympathize with the pursuit of an ideal that belongs to no culture in particular, because it is by definition universal: freedom." (*A/66/PV.11, p. 8*)

Brazil strongly supports the Alliance of Civilizations initiative and considers it a highly effective tool of soft power for conflict prevention and the promotion of peace and understanding. The Doha Forum to be held in December represents a major challenge to the political construction of the Alliance. Accordingly, the ministerial meeting to be held during the Forum is highly anticipated.

Finally, inspired by the youthful and joyful spirit of the Rio Forum Declaration, Brazil wishes to thank Qatar for the invitation to the Doha Forum and to join efforts with all Member States in our common task of achieving significant results at that event.

Mr. Jabessa (Ethiopia): Each year, the General Assembly considers this agenda item because of its importance to the international community, and my delegation is always pleased to take part in this plenary annual debate on the Alliance of Civilizations.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/66/280) on the agenda item under consideration. My delegation is of the view that the report will enable us to be cognizant and appreciative of the activities of the United Nations and its affiliated entities with regard to dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions.

It is to be recalled that the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) clearly indicates that tolerance is one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century and that it should include the active promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations.

The conduct of a dialogue among civilizations is an extremely valuable and timely issue that is needed to address, through combined efforts, the major challenges of religious intolerance and extremist tendencies that the world is currently facing. The major challenges and opportunities that the nations of the world are presented with today include the increasing diversity of our cultures, beliefs and values. Today's reality is that if we succeed in using our diversity to promote understanding and tolerance, that will become a source of great opportunities and strength for our multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual world. If we fail to use our diversity to work for the common good of our peoples, it will undoubtedly become a source of great weakness and challenges.

Recognizing dialogue as a powerful instrument to find a global solution to the problems of our world, which is often characterized by intolerance and cultural and religious divisions, it is indeed gratifying to note that the Alliance's last three consecutive forums have been useful and effective in addressing these key global challenges. In fact, the forums turned out to be exceptionally useful for the conduct of interactive dialogues among diverse faiths and beliefs and for the establishment of a global partnership aimed at undertaking collective efforts to tackle the problems of diversity and maximize its benefits so as to further promote an understanding of one another's cultural and religious differences.

We believe that the Alliance plays a central role in enabling States to conduct harmonious cross-cultural dialogues. In that regard, we expect that the fourth annual Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which will take place in Doha this December, will make positive contributions to intercultural dialogue among nations.

Dialogue among different faiths and cultures aimed at maintaining global peace and international security, and for peaceful coexistence and international social cohesion between and among nations, is indeed critical. This is particularly true at a time when extremists are more than ever determined to exploit cultural and religious divisions to sow seeds of discord among nations. These extremist forces must not be allowed to use xenophobic intolerance to promote hatred and harmful attitudes among our societies. We must engage Governments, civic groups and organizations to prevent the dissemination of their evil ideas and defeat them through joint concerted actions.

Raising awareness about the danger that their ideas pose to our diverse cultural heritages and civilizations is one of best ways to ensure that they will not succeed in their efforts to foster clashes among nations. This can be done through the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, States, civil society and organizations at the national, regional and internationals levels, such as faith-based institutions and media. For this purpose, the Alliance could do more facilitation work by adopting a proactive policy aimed at bringing about attitudinal changes through the conduct of workshops, seminars and other forums for interactive dialogues.

Today's Ethiopia reflects the diverse nature of its peoples and nationalities, with their distinct cultures, religions, linguistic and ethnic characteristics. Ethiopia is also an ancient land with its own, centuries-old unique civilizations, traditions and customs. It is indeed a mosaic society in which peoples of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds live peacefully with a strong sense of affinity with one another and in unity. This has been a trademark of our country for centuries. Our long history of tolerance and harmonious coexistence is a reflection of our uniqueness as a society of diverse faiths and cultures.

Aware of this reality, the Government of Ethiopia has taken various measures to further enhance our diversity in unity and has encouraged a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in our society. The adoption of a federal Constitution that enshrines and guarantees the basic human rights and the freedom of Ethiopians to pursue any religion or belief of their choice without restrictions is the most important and fundamental step taken in this regard. The fact that our Constitution clearly stipulates that the Ethiopian State is a secular one and that Ethiopians are free to practice any religion of their preference, and that our penal code does not allow any behaviour or act harmful to religious liberty, underscores the strong commitment of our Government to further enhancing and nurturing the values of diversity.

It is in line with these provisions of the Constitution and the policy that Ethiopia is pursuing that the Government is encouraging the strengthening of cultural tolerance and peaceful coexistence in society through various means, including teachings in schools and the media at the local and national levels. Moreover, the Government has created an environment for religious institutions, civic groups and the people at large that is conducive to conducting interactive dialogues, on a sustainable basis, to further promote tolerance and address challenges related to religious and cultural misunderstandings. This is indeed a fundamental departure from past ways of thinking and practices in our country.

Ethiopia has contributed actively to the efforts of the Alliance to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue, as we believe that it is necessary to prevent terrorists and extremists from using religious intolerance and cultural differences to achieve their evil objectives. We therefore remain committed to the Alliance, which offers us the best forum of a universal character that brings together all nations to make a meaningful impact on the ground.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly of Ethiopia's strong commitment to work together to ensure the continued successful work of the Alliance.

Mr. Meek (United States of America): The United States is grateful for the opportunity to speak on this important agenda item dealing with the culture of peace. The United States supports efforts around the world that create a forum for people with different views to express themselves through dialogue. That is why we support initiatives like last year's resolution 65/5, on World Interfaith Harmony Week, introduced by Jordan.

It is also why we joined the consensus in March at the Human Rights Council on its important resolution that addressed combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and the stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against, persons based on religion or belief (A/HRC/RES/16/18). That resolution signals an important turning point in the effort to address the use of collaboration to deal with the problem and we look forward to continuing our engagement with all countries on that issue.

The United States believes that peace can be achieved when people come together to understand, accept one another and shun the violence and hatred born of intolerance. Fostering mutual understanding and an inclusive social environment, in which the rights of all individuals, irrespective of religion or cultural background, are protected, provides the cornerstone for trust and lasting peace. The United States confirms unequivocally that freedom of expression and open dialogue among members of different religions and cultures are critical to combating intolerance and to promoting peaceful coexistence.

We hope that all Member States and relevant stakeholders throughout the world will contribute to strengthening the foundation of tolerance and respect for diversity and enhance the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's willingness and commitment to work with the Assembly and its President to advance the good work of the Organization on the most important matter of a culture of peace.

We all desire a world of peace and cooperation. Out of the horrors of two World Wars, we resolved to work closely together to rid the world of the threats of violence and destruction and to further strengthen the foundations of a just and equitable international order. Yet despite the advancements that we have made, we continue to face tremendous challenges. Despite our efforts to bring nations and peoples closer together in greater understanding, mutual respect and tolerance, dark elements continue to threaten to pull apart nations and individuals, feeding on rancour and resentment, inflicting pain and suffering and forcing violence and fear upon our world.

We must continue to be vigilant against those who seek to rend us apart. For 10 years, since 9/11, even as our memories continue to be haunted by the horrors of that act — which made victims of us all — we realize that those dark elements continue to linger. The hatred continues to fester. Its insidious form continues to mutate.

It is regrettable that our people have to endure violence in its many malevolent forms. Peoples are broken further apart by those who seek to sow confusion, doubt and suspicion and by those who prey on the disenfranchised and the marginalized and

surreptitiously use the faith of others, their culture and their religion, to push for and justify their own dark agenda. The Philippines joins other nations in condemning such acts in all their forms and manifestations. The Philippines likewise asserts that such acts should not be associated in any way with any culture, faith or religion.

For the Philippines — and indeed for the rest of the world — faith, culture and religion rightly give millions of people hope in this world, the will to treat others as they treat themselves and the impetus to work with others towards a more inclusive and more understanding world. It is that abiding belief that has moved us to try to help harness the world community's collective strength to further strengthen the foundations of a world respectful of humankind's diversity.

In that regard, the Philippines welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on intercultural, interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue (A/66/280) and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the UNESCO report on the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/66/273). The report discusses, in a comprehensive and detailed manner, the efforts made to push the peace agenda into the place where it matters most: in the hearts and minds of people. The report likewise outlines the challenges we must address as we seek to build on the good work already being done.

The Philippines notes that the report underscores the cross-cutting nature of the work being done to foster a culture of peace and emphasizes the growing involvement of an ever-widening group of stakeholders among Member States and those within and outside the United Nations system, including civil society organizations, to accomplish our shared objectives.

The proclamation of 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures serves to underscore the need to sustain our efforts in fostering dialogue. Included are our efforts, among other things, to provide greater opportunities for research, meetings, public debates and the like, promote the role of creativity and innovation in sending an effective message for intercultural and interreligious dialogue across many platforms, improve access to formal and non-formal education with emphasis on quality education for all and acknowledge the contributions of the media and of new information and communications technology to changing perceptions of different cultures and religions.

The International Year of Rapprochement of Cultures also made possible partnerships in about 1,000 projects that succeeded in achieving the key global objectives of the Year. That success highlights the importance of partnerships and the need to replicate our efforts at the grassroots level, where they matter most. The Philippines welcomes the conclusion that emerges from these activities:

> "[I]n the new international landscape, greater account must be taken of the linkages among cultural diversity, dialogue, development, security and peace." (*A/66/273, annex, para. 42*)

That was one of the main elements in the Philippines-sponsored resolution 65/138, on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, last year, which called for Member States to use, as appropriate and where applicable, interreligious and intercultural dialogue as an important tool in efforts aimed at achieving peace and the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals. We stand ready to work with other stakeholders to give life to, and further build on, that resolution.

We thank Pakistan, the principal sponsor, as well as the core group of sponsors and the nearly 50 other sponsors for their sustained partnership. Looking back on the years of work that have gone into that resolution and previous resolutions on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, we can see how Member States with diverse cultures, beliefs, religions and faiths have been able to transcend differences to work on the common objective of fostering a culture of peace. This is a living lesson in dialogue that the Organization should rightly be proud of, a living lesson that the Philippines and other partners are striving to replicate in our respective countries and regions.

The Philippines supports the findings in the Secretary-General's report, which states that the urgent need for linkages at the global, regional and local levels to promote such vital but fragile dialogue must be stressed. Even before this finding was laid out in this report, the Philippines had already been working at the international and regional levels to broaden religious and intercultural dialogue, most recently in the Special Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development, held in Manila in 2010 — the

largest intergovernmental gathering convened to discuss ways to promote interfaith dialogue.

As I speak, the Philippines is continuing to do its part in encouraging this dialogue. This month the Philippines co-hosted, along with Finland and the European Union, the seventh Interfaith Dialogue of the Europe-Asia Meeting (ASEM) in Manila with the theme "Harnessing the benefits and addressing the challenges of migration to interfaith and intercultural dialogue".

As contained in its Manila Statement, the seventh ASEM Interfaith Dialogue discussed ways to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity of cultures and for freedom of religion and beliefs in the context of increased mobility and people-to-people interaction. Those and other activities are positive contributions related to the recommendation in the report of the Director-General of UNESCO encouraging Member States to create links among organizations that are active in promoting intercultural dialogue and that are committed to fostering sustainable development and peace in order to create a new dynamic for living peacefully together.

The Philippines also appreciates the continuing work of the Alliance of Civilizations in promoting interfaith dialogue. The meeting in Doha will be an important opportunity to take stock of current efforts and to learn from the experiences of the participants.

In this regard too, the Philippines welcomes the development by UNESCO of an intersectoral and interdisciplinary Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, which the organization is expected to adopt at the thirty-sixth session of its General Conference this year.

The Philippines notes the activities undertaken by the United Nations system to promote intercultural dialogue. UNESCO and the United Nations Secretariat's Department of Economic and Social Affairs in particular have been working with stakeholders like the Philippines on providing opportunities to draw in civil society members such as religious non-governmental organizations to foster and develop ideas on how to move the agenda of a culture of peace further forward.

The Philippines would also like to underscore the important role the Secretariat's Department of Public Information can play in effectively and efficiently sending a message of peace and dialogue by reaching a broader sector across many platforms and at many points through the use of information and communications technology.

The Philippines likewise welcomes the rights-based approach to the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Indeed, only within the context of human rights and a legal framework can we hope to further strengthen our efforts for greater understanding and mutual respect.

Before concluding, allow me once again to reaffirm the commitment of the Philippines to work with the President and other stakeholders to further advance the work we have done so far. Indeed, the road ahead and the journey forward remain long. However, we are confident that we will reach our destination. Fully resolved to turn our vision into reality, we will forge ahead undeterred, learning from each other, understanding from one another and respecting the other as we respect ourselves.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Turkey welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the culture of peace (A/66/280). I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his personal engagement in this very important matter.

As a sponsor of the Alliance of Civilizations, we are particularly pleased to observe an increasing number of educational and awareness-raising activities to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. We believe that cultural diversity is an integral part of the common heritage of humanity and an asset for the advancement of humankind. We should therefore accept differences, fight ignorance and prejudice, identify commonalities, respect others and encourage dialogue at every level.

To that end, we have been actively engaged in the activities carried out in the framework of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. These activities aim at improving global understanding by using various tools such as social media, education, research and new technologies. In this context, we want to recognize the important role played by UNESCO in the celebration of this Year and in the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

We believe that the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, which we launched together with Spain, is now a truly global peace initiative aimed at breaking

down walls of misperception, connecting people and building bridges towards peaceful cohabitation. We are pleased to see that a growing number of Member States embrace and act upon the ideals of the Alliance. Such wide recognition and support make us all the more hopeful for the future, as only the commitment of Member States to the ideals of cultural diversity can carry the Alliance of Civilizations agenda forward.

The fourth Forum of the Alliance, which will take place in Doha from 11 to 13 December, will be an important opportunity to reinforce commitments for action and to develop new strategies for an inclusive and open intercultural dialogue. We welcome Sheikha Mozah's suggestion to create synergies between the objectives of the Alliance and the advancement of the Millennium Development Goals. Let us not forget that eventually human development, security and peace are indivisible and are vital for our progress. We are therefore looking forward to actively contributing to the Doha Forum.

Finally, let me express our sincere belief that our continued efforts in this direction will produce a more tolerant and peaceful world for future generations.

Mr. Butt (Pakistan): While the world continues to witness violence and confrontation caused by longstanding political and territorial disputes, and the suffering they produce, new obstacles to peace have emerged in the shape of divisive policies or ideologies and resort to violent means, including terrorism. Economic suffering caused by the continuing global financial crisis has further shrunk the space for accommodation and understanding among peoples.

In the face of such discord and division, today's agenda item is a reminder of the importance of maintaining a culture of peace, which was the motivation behind the establishment of this very Organization, the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations enunciated the principles of practicing tolerance and living together in peace with one another as good neighbours, uniting our strength to maintain international peace and security, and promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

All religions and cultures share a common set of universal values: peace, tolerance and equality. Sharing and respect for humanity is the core message of all religions. Religion and culture must therefore not be allowed to become a source of division. We must cherish the unity and indivisibility of the human race and all humankind, no matter what religion or particular culture we belong to.

Unfortunately, though, there remain those in this world who thrive on chaos; they seek to draw power by pitting thought against thought, fate against fate, and people against people. Hate speech against religions are rampant. This only incites violence. Pakistan rejects such divisive policies, trends and practices and has joined with all efforts and forums aimed at uniting us as one human race, sharing a common set of values that promote the universal application of all human rights for all, in a non-discriminatory and non-selective manner.

The world must stand together to decry those who would use religion to advance a rigid and extremist political agenda. We must use religion as a bridge, bringing nations together, not as a wall keeping them apart. It is therefore critical that we undertake the task of building on faith as a means of finding common ground between different nations and civilizations. It was this very principle that motivated Pakistan and the Philippines to jointly sponsor the original resolution on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (resolution 58/128). As in the past, the draft resolution will be presented again this year, and we are confident that, as at previous sessions, it will be endorsed unanimously by the General Assembly. This draft resolution stresses the need for promoting interreligious dialogue starting with the grassroots level, in order to address the unfounded misperceptions that result in divisiveness, intolerance and violence.

We are happy to note that this was also one of the important conclusions that emerged from the range of activities organized during the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. In an effort to promote this noble cause, Pakistan, together with the Philippines, also sponsored the seventh Asia-Europe Meeting Interfaith Dialogue in Manila this month, which again helped to highlight the ongoing challenges and the need to address them through enhanced interfaith and intercultural dialogue. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/66/280), which appropriately highlights the important and cross-cutting nature of the work aimed at fostering a culture of peace, and the efforts made in that regard by a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society.

Pakistan fully recognizes the need for promoting religious and cultural harmony, and has taken several important steps to enhance initiatives to that end. There are interfaith committees at the national and district levels with representatives of all religions, in order to promote greater understanding, peace and harmony among followers of different religions. We have also created the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Foundation expressly to promote and encourage dialogue, inclusion and exchange within our society.

Promoting a culture of peace and avoiding conflict is not an easy task. It can only be achieved through understanding, sharing, sacrifice and dialogue among the parties concerned. The challenge we face every day is to replace fear with acceptance, harassment with tolerance and hatred with respect and understanding. Cooperation, and not the clash of civilizations, must be the paradigm of our collective efforts. To make the world a better place for our children, we all share the responsibility to highlight and propagate our common values of peace, tolerance, equality, sharing and respect for humankind. We should encourage the next generation, those who will lead after us, not only to use education and exchange to adapt to modernity, but also to use modernity and technology to change the world into a better and more peaceful place for all.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Concerning agenda item 15, entitled "Culture of peace", the Secretary-General's report (A/66/280) and note (A/66/273), which have been submitted for our consideration, praise dialogue between cultures, religions and civilizations. They provide an overview of the measures carried out within the framework of a programme of action for a culture of peace, namely, through education, sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, participation in democracy, understanding and tolerance, and international peace and security.

In the light of the criteria and recommendations contained in the report and the note, my delegation would like to add to this debate by sharing the experience of my own country, Cameroon. A country that has been called "Africa in miniature", owing to its geopolitical, geographic, human, religious and cultural diversity, Cameroon has always proclaimed and demonstrated its commitment to peace, both within and beyond its borders.

First, on peace within our borders: Cameroon's motto is "Peace, work, country". As is clear, the word "peace" is one of the elements of the trio; that is, the role, the importance and commitment to peace that have sustained our people and its leaders from the foundation of our State. It is this mystique of peace that since then has left an indelible mark on our national makeup in all its forms.

From a political standpoint, that mystique can be seen in our patient promotion and consolidation of an open political pluralism, with many political parties that cover the full ideological spectrum of modern political life. The party in power works unceasingly for peace, unity and development. The presidential election held on 9 October was another illustration of this, taking place in a peaceful atmosphere that was commended by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon the next day in a press statement conveyed by his Spokesperson. The same can be said of other observers present at the election.

Their Holinesses Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, who both visited our country, twice in the case of the former, delivered ringing tributes to our Government for the efforts to build peace in our country. In general, from the political standpoint, those who know Cameroon well will notice that peace, tolerance and respect for diversity can be seen through the various individuals who head our principal constitutional and public bodies, a set of attitudes designed to preserve and promote peace among the various elements that make up our nation.

With regard to languages, the equality of the two official languages, French and English, as well as that of all the national languages, is guaranteed by the Constitution. It can be seen on a daily basis through an equal use of the two official languages in official records of the Republic, in the State media and in education.

In terms of economic development and land management, the State has been striving to invest in infrastructure in the different regions of our national territory according to their potential, which is quite varied because of a very diverse geography, which goes from the Atlantic coast through the equatorial forest to the Sahel.

Freedom of worship and religion is a right guaranteed by the Constitution. Cameroon is a country where we find side by side, in tolerance and mutual

understanding, monotheistic religions such as Islam and Christianity, atheistic spirituality and, of course, African religions, which form our shared spiritual foundation.

That is what I can say about our commitment to peace in respect for diversity within our borders.

Now, let us look outside our borders. Two primary principles, among several, guide Cameroon's foreign policy, and this is in accordance with the Constitution and the Charter of the United Nations. The first principle is that of a policy of good-neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence. The second is that of peaceful settlement of disputes.

With respect to the first principle, Cameroon shares its borders with Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Cameroon has excellent neighbourly relations with all of these countries. In case of a dispute, as was the situation at one point with Nigeria concerning the Bakassi peninsula, our country prefers peaceful settlement and mediation — the peaceful settlement by jurisdictional means, in this case the acceptance of the optional clause of the mandatory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. That led to the Court's decision in October 2002 and to mediation by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and friendly countries for the implementation of the decision.

That is how my country is striving to preserve domestic and foreign peace within a political, cultural, linguistically and religiously diverse context. My delegation is pleased that this option, chosen by the senior officials in my country, is on the same wavelength as the principles, values, objectives and actions of the United Nations, and in this particular case with the conclusions of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO, which have been submitted for our consideration today.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): As the General Assembly once again takes up this agenda item, my delegation draws attention to the critical role that the United Nations plays in the promotion and strengthening of a culture of peace throughout the world.

As the Declaration on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243) affirmed, such a culture must be based on respect for life, ending of violence and the promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation. The fuller development of a culture of peace is integrally linked to advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all civilizations, peoples and cultures, including with regard to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. This is as important now as it was when the Declaration was proclaimed, for Governments have a responsibility to respect and protect all persons, to foster peace and to promote education, dialogue and cooperation for the building of a society marked by harmonious coexistence.

During the general debate of the sixty-sixth session, my delegation affirmed that respect for religious liberty is the fundamental path for peacebuilding, the recognition of human dignity and the safeguarding of the rights of the human person. Unfortunately, today there are numerous situations in which the right of religious liberty is injured or denied, especially for believers of different religions. There is an increase in religiously motivated intolerance, and, unfortunately, one sees that Christians in various parts of the world are increasingly subjected to discrimination and violence because of their faith, including the recent tragic incidents in Egypt.

The lack of respect for religious freedom is a threat to security and peace and impedes the realization of authentic, integral human development. The particular influence of a specific religion in a nation should never imply that citizens belonging to other confessions are discriminated against in social life or, worse still, that violence against them is tolerated.

In that connection, a common commitment to recognizing and promoting the religious liberty of every person and every community is favoured by sincere interreligious dialogue. Governments and international agencies are called on to support such work among individuals and communities. Effective measures must be adopted for the protection of all religious minorities wherever they are threatened, in order that, above all, believers of all confessions can live in security and continue to make their contribution to the society of which they are members.

Unfortunately, there are also countries in the world today, especially some so-called developed

countries, in which, although great importance is given to pluralism and tolerance, religion tends paradoxically to be considered as a factor foreign or destabilizing to modern society, in which different means are sought to marginalize religion and impede it from influencing social life.

Yet it is an undeniable fact that the great religions of the world have made a significant contribution to the development of civilization, as the sincere search for God has led to greater respect for the dignity of the human person. Christian communities, with their patrimonies of values and principles, have contributed strongly to individuals' and peoples' awareness of their identity and dignity, as well as to the triumph of the institutions of the rule of law and to the affirmation of the rights of the human person and of his or her corresponding duties. From that perspective, it is important that believers feel as free today as yesterday to offer their contribution to the promotion of the just regulation of human realities, both through responsible commitments at the civil, economic and political level and through the witness of their charity and faith.

My delegation is aware of the many activities carried out by the main United Nations entities in the field of dialogue. In that regard, it is essential that the activities carried out by those actors truly support cultures and religions in building a culture of peace. That means fully respecting the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people in conformity with universally recognized human rights.

The principles upon which the Organization was founded are a constant reminder for all States to commit themselves to bringing an end to all conflicts and building peaceful coexistence among all peoples. That requires Governments to work to protect all of their citizens and promote mutual understanding. The more that Governments are able to do this, the more they will able to achieve their purpose, namely, the promotion of the common good, which necessarily entails recognition, respect, defence and promotion of the rights of all persons.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Lobry-Boulanger (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): On the heels of the International Day of Non-Violence and following the theme of this year's general debate — "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" — the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) welcomes this timely debate on a culture of peace. The IFRC further welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/280) and of the Director-General of UNESCO (see A/66/273) on this agenda item, and the progress described in them.

The IFRC is strongly committed to fostering a global culture of respect for diversity, non-violence and peace, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion where human values and dignity are truly celebrated. Indeed, promoting social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace is one of the IFRC's three organizational priorities for the present decade.

Based on the extensive experience of our 186 National Societies at the community level, today I would like to touch on the role of values and skills-based education, the importance of engaging and empowering youth and the promotion of non-violence.

We all carry biases and prejudice from our upbringing, schooling, media and other influences. Addressing violent expressions such as discrimination and exclusion requires a change of mindsets, attitudes and behaviours at the level of the individual and an enabling environment for that change to happen. One place to start is reinforcement of the role of education, both formal and informal, in the promotion of a culture of non-violence and peace, not only in schools but in a variety of settings such as family, sports and social activities.

In his report on current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on education, the Secretary-General states that "Schools should be seen first and foremost as places for imparting the most vital skills: tolerance, mutual respect and the ability to live peacefully with others" (*E/2011/82, para. 79*). The IFRC supports that view and believes that schools, along with other settings, present opportunities for us to learn values such as respect for diversity, mutual understanding, compassion and cooperation, and to develop skills like empathy, non-violent communication and peaceful resolution of tensions. In short, a values and skills-based education is vital to transforming the ways we relate to each other.

Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change — YABC — is a flagship initiative of the IFRC that

places youth at the centre of efforts to promote a culture of non-violence and peace through informal values and skills-based peer education. The initiative was created for youth and with youth in the Red Cross Red Crescent worldwide and empowers them to assume a leadership role in transforming their local communities. The YABC initiative uses a non-cognitive methodology, peer education and innovative platforms such as games, role-playing, visualization, drama, dance, arts, relaxation and movement. It has been met by great appreciation of both youth and parents.

Teachers have also welcomed the YABC methodology within formal education systems. For example, the French Red Cross, which partners with its Government in providing humanitarian values education in schools, has begun utilizing the YABC methodology in its work, with great success. The IFRC encourages the institutionalization of values and skills-based education in formal school curricula at the national level, starting in primary and pre-school levels, as well as its inclusion in informal education.

In the face of levels of violence that affect all continents, countries and communities, a values and skills-based education can help us address the underlying causes, especially when coupled with initiatives that foster social inclusion and respect for diversity and that build resilience against violence. Our goal must be to promote a culture where violence is never an option. Since violence risk factors exist at multiple levels — individual, family, community, social and cultural — it is possible to work in each level and thus enhance resilience. In other words, we can build individual or community capacity to adapt to and remain strong in the face of adversity.

Concretely, communities that invest in programmes that proactively prevent stigma, gender inequality and abuse, among many other activities and that empower vulnerable groups of people will become stronger and less prone to violence. It is important to target youth and communities most at risk. For example, our member National Societies in the Central American and Caribbean region are addressing youth at risk of exclusion in 11 urban and suburban areas by increasing their social and institutional skills through the Regional Strategy on Violence Prevention project. Another example is the Soccer Against Violence project of the South African Red Cross, which inculcates values such as tolerance, self-discipline and personal development in youth at risk — youth who face high levels of violence, intolerance and social crimes, among other factors.

Given that differences of opinion and disagreements are a normal part of humanity, the real question is: how can we deal with them in a constructive way? Pursuing values and skills-based education, empowering youth and investing in violence prevention are all concrete actions we can take to help transform mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. In all corners of the world, communities today face challenges that require creative and constructive solutions that foster a culture of peace.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 15. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of item 15.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Request for the inclusion of an additional sub-item submitted by the Secretary-General (A/66/231)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take up a request submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/66/231 relating to the membership of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee. In his note, the Secretary-General informs the Assembly of the resignation of Andrei Kovalenko from the membership of the Staff Pension Committee effective 19 September. A vacancy in the Committee therefore occurred on that date.

As the agenda of the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly does not contain a sub-item on the appointment of members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee, the Secretary-General has therefore deemed it necessary to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional sub-item entitled "Appointment of members and alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee", under agenda item 115, "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments".

Owing to the nature of the item, unless there is an objection, may I take it that the General Assembly

agrees that the relevant provision of rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which would require a meeting of the General Committee on the question of the inclusion of this additional sub-item on the agenda, could be waived?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to include in the agenda of the current session an additional sub-item entitled "Appointment of members and alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee" as a sub-item of agenda item 115 under Heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters"?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Secretary-General has requested that the sub-item be allocated to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to allocate this sub-item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform embers that this additional sub-item becomes sub-item (k) of agenda item 115 on the agenda of the current session.

Documentation for the election of the members of the International Law Commission

The Acting President: I would now like to consult the General Assembly on a matter concerning sub-item (b) of agenda item 114, "Election of the members of the International Law Commission", which election has been scheduled to take place on Thursday, 17 November 2011. On that day, the Assembly will proceed to the election of 34 members of the Commission, whose terms of office are to commence on 1 January 2012. It should be recalled that, in accordance with the statute of the International Law Commission, the Secretary-General communicated to the Governments of Member States, in document A/66/88, the list of candidates submitted within the required time for the submission of nominations, that is, by 1 June 2011.

In documents A/66/88/Add.1, Add.2 and Add.3, the Secretary-General reported developments concerning candidates, including new candidates and a withdrawal, since the issuance of document A/66/88. The statements of qualifications of the candidates are contained in document A/66/90 and Add.1 and Add.2.

Under these circumstances, it is necessary for the General Assembly to take a decision as to whether the new candidatures should be accepted in spite of the submission of their names subsequent to the deadline and whether they should be incorporated into a consolidated list of candidates. It has been the practice of the Assembly to incorporate such late submissions into a consolidated list.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to issue such a consolidated list of candidates.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The consolidated list of candidates will be issued under the symbol A/66/514.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.